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Billy Lied About Payment, Justice Dept. Official Says

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The Justice Department's chief investigator of Billy Carter's activities as a foreign agent said yesterday that the president's brother "lied" to him twice about \$220,000 in payments from Libya.

Joel S. Lisker, chief of the Justice Department's foreign agents registration unit, also said that the White House may have received information from one of the "three or four sources" which on May 30 first provided the Justice Department with solid evidence of Libyan payments to Billy Carter.

Lisker said that additional evidence came sometime before June 11, the day Billy Carter, after being pressured by Lisker, disclosed that he had gotten payments from the Libyans.

The first "lie" by Billy Carter to Lisker occurred Jan. 16 when Billy Carter denied receiving any payments from Libya, Lisker said, even though on Dec. 31, 1979, he had deposited in an account of his at the Columbus (Ga.) Bank and Trust Co. a \$20,000 check drawn Dec. 27 on the Libyan account at Riggs National Bank here.

During that interview in Americus, Ga., Billy Carter told Lisker he had received several hundred dollars in expense money from the Libyans when he visited the country twice and gifts including a fancy saddle, gold bracelets and a scimitar.

Billy Carter claimed that the Libyans owed him \$6,500 to \$7,500 in unreimbursed expenses for a reception he had held for them in Atlanta in January 1979. "He said he had paid for it out of pocket and had never gotten it back," Lisker said.

"I asked him specifically if he had gotten any money. He lied because he didn't disclose that (\$20,000 payment). I think it is fairly obvious he misled me, he lied," Lisker said. "It is pretty clear now that Billy lied on two occasions. It calls into question the veracity of his entire registration statement."

During the June 11 interview, the president's brother did not admit having received payments until Lisker indicated that he knew about

them. Then, Lisker said, Billy Carter claimed the \$20,000 payment he had received from Libya on Dec. 27, 1979, was partial reimbursement to him for \$40,000 in expenses for the January 1979 trip to Atlanta and other U.S. cities by the Libyans.

Billy Carter in June claimed that he had misestimated in January the amount owed by the Libyans for the Atlanta reception. "He said the \$20,000 was reimbursement," Lisker said. "Then he later characterized this \$20,000 as a loan."

On his registration statement, Billy Carter claimed that in 1979 he had negotiated an undocumented loan from the Libyans for \$500,000 and that the \$220,000 was partial payment of it.

Lisker also said he does not know whether the White House learned of the payments before Billy Carter listed them on a foreign agents registration statement he filed as part of a settlement of a Justice Department civil suit July 14 or whether inside knowledge prompted Billy Carter on June 10 to set up an appointment for an interview the next day.

Asked, "Do you think anybody at the White House told him (Billy Carter)?" Lisker replied, "No comment." Lisker added that he did not believe that anyone at the Justice Department had informed the White House of the evidence about the payments.

Justice Department officials have said that they had "hints" and "inklings" of payments as early as April of payments to Billy Carter but did not receive the "firm evidence" until May 30. Sources have told The Washington Star that information about Libyan payments to Billy Carter was first received in April, but that that tip was not correct.

Yesterday, Lisker told reporters in his office that he would not reveal the source of information about the payments. Then he added, "We're talking about three different sources. I'm not telling you whether they are live sources or technical sources."

Lisker continued, "Actually, there were four sources. I didn't

learn about one of these sources until later, although the information had been received elsewhere in the department."

He said, "It is possible that the White House had access to one source." He refused to elaborate.

Lisker also denied Billy Carter's charge that the Justice Department had tapped his phone.

While the original investigation of Billy Carter's foreign agency is now closed, Lisker said that the "lies" by the president's brother would force the Justice Department to continue investigating whether the July 14 registration statement is accurate.

Lisker said that there are several loose ends that need to be tied up, including verifying the values of the Libyan gifts listed by Billy Carter and checking out his claim that the president had given him CIA cables.

"We are trying to find out if Billy got this information (cables) and who gave it to him," Lisker said. "This could open a whole other avenue as to his contacts with the administration."

He added that Billy Carter's "lies" would not be prosecutable because making an "exculpatory false statement" to an FBI agent or investigator is not a crime. He explained that exculpatory means lying in order to avoid self-incrimination.

Lisker, who generally has been unavailable for comment, made his remarks on the record at the instruction of Assistant Attorney General Philip B. Heymann, chief of the Criminal Division, after two congressmen began disclosing the contents of department reports that had been sent Tuesday to the House Judiciary Committee.

Rep. Harold Sawyer, R-Mich., and Harold L. Volkmer, D-Mo., disclosed that Billy Carter claimed to have received cables from his brother.

Justice Department officials are reviewing the records of the case and expect to release most of them to the press within a few days, several department sources said.

Billy Carter was not available for comment. His attorney, Stephen J. Pollak, declined to comment yesterday.